**Another Genealogy?** April 24, 16

Genesis 11:10-32

Our study in Genesis brings us to… another genealogy!

Maybe you’re thinking what I thought earlier this week – another genealogy??

There’s got to be something else – isn’t there anything else – God could have told us about than... another list of names and how long each person lived???

But remember… the book of Genesis explains:

* the person of God and his purposes for this world
* what went wrong with us and the earth, and
* what God began to do to undo the calamity of sin and death.

So instead of saying …wasn’t there anything else God could have told us about; we need to ask …why did God want his people to know about… these names?

Steven Cole explains: *The point of the text is to show us that God is the God of history who is working out his eternal plan through the lives of his people.*

*His movements sometimes seem slow by our standards. But he is steadily at work. And this God of history is our God. He has called us to himself and will use us in his eternal plan. Knowing this gives meaning to our lives. \* The God of History and You.*

Let’s re-state the high points of what we’ve learned so far in Genesis.

* God is the Creator.
* In the beginning everything he made was good.
* Humans chose to open the door to sin and death.
* But instead of abandoning us to our fate, God initiated his rescue plan.
* God told Eve the Rescuer would be an offspring of hers – 3:15.

Did Eve wonder when Cain was born if he was the one?

And then when Abel came long did she question, “Is it him?”

After Abel’s death, and Seth’s birth, did she and Adam talk about whether it would be Seth?

* From the first genealogy in Genesis 5 we learn that while Seth was not the Rescuer, someone from his family line would be.

Then the story of Genesis fast forwards eight generations to Noah.

* Genesis 6-9 teaches that in Noah’s day the earth had become so corrupt that it was beyond saving.
* Humanity chose to ignore God’s warning and refused to access God’s salvation (the ark), except for one man and one woman and their three sons and wives.
* With these eight people God restarted human life on earth.
* Genesis 10 details how God founded 70 nations from the offspring of Noah’s sons.
* Genesis 11:1-9 tell us how quickly God was again forgotten and ignored by those offspring.

What humans did at Babel, frustrated God, but not to the point that he considered cancelling his plan to send a Rescuer. What their actions highlighted was just how desperately humanity needed God’s Savior.

When the book of Genesis presents another genealogy in Genesis 11, it is so the reader might learn how God continued to build the family line of his Rescuer, from Seth… through Noah and Shem…to Abraham.

**Read the passage.**

**Pause at v.18**.

Peleg is also mentioned in Genesis 10:25.

What does it mean – *“in his time the earth was divided*?”

In Peleg’s generation God confused the language of the world.

When Peleg was born how long had it been since the flood?

Add up the numbers in the verses we just read – 2+35+30+34 – and you get 101.

So what does this communicate?

The events of Babel, didn’t happen because people of that day didn’t know about the Creator God or that he is the Judge of the world.

It happened in spite of what they knew.

Those people acted against God with their eyes wide open.

You could almost say there is an insanity to sin.

Paul writes of that “insanity” in his own life.

Romans 7:15, 18b-19:

*I do not understand what I do.*

*For what I want to do*

*I do not do,*

*but what I hate.. I do.*

*I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*

*For what I do*

*is not the good I want to do;*

*no, the evil I do not want to do -*

*this I keep on doing.*

The story of the Bible which unfolds over centuries, reveals that the rupture in the relationship between God and mankind is not one that humans can fix; even if and when they know how just and powerful God is.

The building of Babel so long ago was that generation’s decision to live without God. Moses original audience (the nation of Israel) would soon move into the land promised by God to Abraham. As they did, they would see the first-hand evidence of the Canaanite’s decision to live life without God and understand why God had to intervene to judge and restrain.

God taught them this in order to give them opportunity to choose differently.

But history confirms that every generation chooses against God. We are all guilty.

*There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks after God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

We are meant to learn that what humanity needed was not just a minor tune-up; but a complete re-build.

Let’s keep reading – v.19-26.

Did you notice that the length of human life rapidly declined after the flood?

Shem – 600 year

Arphaxad – 438 years

Shelah – 433 years

Eber – 464 years

Peleg – 239 years

Reu – 239 years

Serug – 230 years

Nahor – 148 years

Terah – 205 years

Abraham - 175 years

When God placed Adam in the Garden he warned him that in the day he ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would die – Genesis 2:17.

When Adam and Eve chose to eat from that tree, what God warned would happen, happened - they died spiritually (that very day) and hundreds of years later, they also both died physically.

Up until the days of Noah, the genealogy of Genesis 5 informs us that humans were allowed by God to live extraordinarily long lives.

807, 905, 840, 910, 895, 969, 777, 930, 815, 912.

You and I can think… how could that be?

But if Adam could speak with us, you know what I’m confident he would express? His shock at how short our lives are.

Just before the flood, in Genesis 6:3 God said in response to how great mankind’s wickedness had become: *"My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years."*

God said through the prophet Isaiah: *My word that goes out from my mouth will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire, and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.* 55:11.

There are a lot of words that you and I speak that return empty.

Sometimes it’s because we speak rashly and end up changing our mind.

Sometimes it’s because we don’t have the means to follow through and bring about what we said.

But God always keeps his word.

God always accomplishes what he says he will do.

God’s word is powerful because he is powerful.

God said before the flood – the lifespan of humans would be shortened to an average of 120 years. And the genealogy of Genesis 11 confirms that this is what happened.

But you probably picked up that the fulfilling of what God said in Genesis 6 was not immediate.

Noah’s grandchildren and great-grandchildren lived longer than 120 years.

Their lifespan did rapidly decline, but it didn’t immediately drop to 120 years.

How are we to understand this?

I couldn’t think of any other way to say this: God plays a long game.

Let me try and explain.

When God told Eve that an offspring of hers would crush the head of the serpent, that offspring wasn’t Abel or Seth; nor was it Shem or Abraham.

God was active to bring his Rescuer to the earth, but he worked across the centuries.

Why did he take so long?

He was waiting for what Galatians 4:4 describes as *“the fullness of time.”*

God does not rush like we do.

With God there is always a right moment that he waits for.

2 Peter 3:9 says, *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you…”*

God waits… because he is patient.

The story of the Bible confirms this truth about God.

You and I are meant to rest in this truth.

We can get anxious about things and then try to force things to happen.

Or in our anxiousness we sometimes become paralyzed and find ourselves unable to act.

But the Bible teaches that we are in relationship with the One who can do anything and who is able to bring about what he says he will do… at the perfect time – not too early; not too late.

To rest in this truth of who God is and his capability, we need the discipline to immerse ourselves in God’s Word so that his Spirit can use that word to transform our minds and our way of thinking.

Do you remember when Peter reacted to Jesus’ words that he must suffer and die? Do you remember what Jesus said to Peter?

*“You are not seeing things from the point of view of God.”*

We learn to rest in God’s ways and his timing as we are trained by his word and the Spirit to see our lives and the circumstances surrounding us from God’s perspective.

2 Peter 3:3-9 speaks of why this perspective is so important.

* God relates to time differently than we do
* The Lord is not slow to keep his promise
* God is patient because of his mercy.

That said, no one should be fooled into thinking that delay means God is unable to act. Look at verse 10 – the last day will come like a thief.

There is also a fullness of time when it comes to… the final day.

And until that final day arrives, look at how the prophet Micah describes the One we are in relationship with.

Micah 2:13: *One who breaks open the way will go before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their king will pass through before them, the Lord at their head.*

The Lord is patient.

And the Lord is “the breaker.”

It is not either or.

The Lord is wonderfully both.

I remind you of Steven Cole’s quote that I read at the beginning:

*The point of the text is to show us that God is the God of history who is working out his eternal plan through the lives of his people. His movements sometimes seem slow by our standards. But he is steadily at work. And this God of history is our God. He has called us to himself and will use us in his eternal plan. Knowing this gives meaning to our lives. \* The God of History and You.*

We can trust God and his timing.

We can trust him to prompt us when we need to take action.

We can trust him when his still, small voice tells us to wait.

The God of history goes before us.

The Blessing

Micah 2:13: *One who breaks open the way will go before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their king will pass through before them, the Lord at their head.*

Sidebar.

One major accusation often brought against God is that if he is good, why doesn’t he stop...children starving or dying from disease; crime being committed; wars being waged; genocides from happening, etc.

I could go on and on...but all that I’ve described are things done by people to other people. What does that reveal about who humans are, that we would blame God for the wrong we do?

What would those who accuse God of being guilty for humanity’s sin, wish God to do? Remove our freedom of choice? God won’t do that.

But he has and still does limit the extent of what any one person can do through their by life, by determining just how long a person lives.

We don’t know how many days we get.

But knowing as James wrote, *“that we are a mist that appears for a little while and then is gone,”* (4:14) is meant to motivate us to live wisely.

The psalmist in 90:12 asked God to teach him how to number his days.

Ephesians 5:16 encourages the follower of Jesus to make *“the most of every opportunity.” 5*:16. Our choices matter.

The things we do and the words we speak will ultimately be evaluated by God (1 Corinthians 3:13-15) and follow us into the life that comes. Revelation 14:13.

One last thing that I see coming out of this genealogy; and it does connect to this matter of God keeping his word.

At creation, God started with one man and one woman.

After the flood, God started again with one man and one woman, and their three married sons. After Babel, from Noah’s three sons, God founded 70 nations which in our day have grown to 196.

At creation, mankind spoke one language.

But because of mankind’s pride at Babel God “confused” the common language of that world, so that as a whole mankind could not understand one another and had no choice but to splinter into smaller groups and spread out over the earth.

How many language groups resulted from this act of God?

Genesis 11 doesn’t say. But we do know that today there are roughly **6,500** spoken languages in the world.

Of those 6500 languages, just 20 are used by almost 60% (4 billion) of the earth’s population.

Almost 3.3 billion people speak the following ten languages.

Mandarin Chinese – 1.3 billion

Spanish – 430 million

English – 340 million

Arabic – 270 million

Hindi – 260 million

Portuguese – 200 million

Bengali – 190 million

Russian – 170 million

Japanese – 130 million

The next 10 top speaking languages are spoken by 740 million people.

Approximately 2000 of those 6500 languages have fewer than **1000** speakers for a combined total of 2 million.

I hope this helps you to comprehend from God’s perspective how serious Babel was. He didn’t divide people into a few dozen groups. God acted to seriously impede mankind’s ability to collaborate in the doing of evil.

Last week we linked Babel, Pentecost and the church in this present time.

Galatians 4:4 speaks of Jesus coming in the fullness of time.

One of the pieces of that fullness of time was the existence of the Roman empire which provide a measure of stability and ease of movement throughout Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

Another piece was the rise of Koine Greek as the language of commerce and the common language used by different ethnicities when communicating with each other.

These two factors helped the gospel of Jesus to spread rapidly.